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SUBJECT: SAUDI ARABIA: ASSISTANT INTERIOR MINISTER SURVIVES ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

¶1. (U) Prince Mohammed bin Naif (MbN), Assistant Interior Minister for Security Affairs, escaped an assassination attempt on August 27 when a suicide bomber detonated himself at the Prince's palace in Jeddah. MbN was treated for minor injuries and then released. There were no other casualties.

¶2. (SBU) According to an official statement, the would-be assassin entered the palace as part of a group of well-wishers coming to pay traditional Ramadan greetings. The assailant was described as a wanted terrorist, who had previously expressed a desire to surrender. He reportedly detonated himself during the security check. RSO sources informally told us that the assailant may have collapsed or fainted and fallen to the floor prior to the detonation, lessening the damage caused by the explosion.

¶3. (U) MbN, the son of Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Prince Naif, is responsible for day-to-day operations at the MOI and widely credited as the driving force behind the Kingdom's post-2003 crackdown on domestic terrorism. The attack on the Prince comes less than a week after the announcement that 44 suspected Al-Qaeda militants had been arrested as part of a year-long sting operation, and amidst reports of increased tension and military activity along the Saudi-Yemeni border.

¶4. (U) Post is following up with contacts and will report additional information as it becomes available.

ERDMAN